

NSC BRIEFING

5 March 1958

NORTH AFRICA *(long)*

I. Tunisia

- A. Bourguiba willing to accept Murphy proposals--evacuation of all French troops except Bizerte, neutral observers at four airfields in south, return of ambassadors--as first phase toward rapprochement with France.
- B. Gaillard, while not rejecting them outright, indicates they not entirely acceptable.
- C. Tunisians generally impatient at lack of action and suspicious of good offices effort.

II. Algeria

- A. Rebel upsurge continues especially in east near Tunisian frontier where rebels reported in general control countryside at night.
- B. French claim not to have begun creation of "no man's land" on Algerian side of border--supposed to include deforesting a large area--but say that they plan only a border strip 4-6 miles wide and 200 miles long (extending about 90 miles south beyond Morice Line).
 - 1. New influx of Algerian refugees into Tunisia--Tunisians claim some 7,000-3,000 in Kasserine area--tell atrocity stories of French paratrooper barbarism and wholesale destruction of property in operation begun 14 February.

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2. A French general in Algeria doubts feasibility of creating scorched earth zone.

C. Meanwhile, Lacoste continues to emphasize importance of Tunisian aid to Algerian rebellion, now beginning its 41st month.

III. Morocco

A. Fighting in Sahara reportedly ceased on 25 February.

1. Spanish claim to have achieved objectives inland from their perimeters.

2. French troops have retired to Mauretania.

3. The rebels hiding out and are probably reforming to start operations again.

B. On 25 February the King publicly endorsed general Istiqlal territorial claims, thereby worsening relations with Spain and probably France.

C. Relations with West, particularly with US, seem to hang in balance.

1. Rabat making new attempt to break French dominance in area; considerable popular agitation for closer relations with Arab world.

2. Rabat has reiterated Nov '56 request that US prevent French use of Port Lyautey or other American bases as entry point for material--fears 22 carloads of supplies (including tanks and half tracks) which entered via Port Lyautey night of 27 February destined for use against Moroccan irregulars in "the south."

3. Rabat expected to make early purchase request for US military items--last fall asked for aid to build ammunition plant.
 4. US aid and base negotiations not going well--Moroccans balk at terminology of defense support amendment, claim it a derogation of sovereignty. Unwilling to commit themselves definitively with West, as Bourguiba has done.
- D. Meanwhile, King is preoccupied with need to end Algerian hostilities.
1. Has asked US to persuade France to release Mohamed Ben Bella--held in Paris prison since he was seized by French military in October 56.
 2. Ben Bella said to represent pro-West, moderate wing of Algerian rebel leadership. King hopes his release could counter pro-Egyptian wing among Algerians.
 3. King opposes Bourguiba's "family solution"--which includes US and UK participation in negotiated settlement.

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IV. France

- A. Premier Gaillard apparently hopes to "spin out" good offices for prolonged period.
1. French deputies reported restless in belief US-UK good offices may go beyond simple reopening of French-Tunisian negotiations.

2. Possibility of a surprise French proposal is suggestion by French official that NATO, to which he would admit Tunisia and Morocco, would be better forum than UN for internationalization French-Tunisian dispute.
- B. Gaillard meanwhile maneuvering to stall parliamentary rebellion, which now focuses on rightist demands for substantial troop reinforcements for Algeria.
 1. Rightist demands reflect military pressures to save Algeria at all costs.
 3. He could still go down next week on constitutional reform issue, but April local election and upcoming Easter recess now make all-out attack politically unpracticable.
- C. Speculation on De Gaulle again current:
 1. No evidence yet that many deputies ready to acquiesce to his stipulation he be legally recalled to power.
- D. There have been increasing indications of ^{French} ~~French~~ military dissatisfaction with the government's North African policies, particularly with respect to Tunisia.

2. Rightist politicians are seizing on the army's dissatisfaction to support their demands that the government adopt extreme policies.